DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 075 EA 025 713

AUTHOR Glines, Don
TITLE Philosophical Rationale for Year-Round Education.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for Year-Round Education (San Diego, CA, February 12-16, 1994).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cost Effectiveness; Elementary Secondary Education; Facility Utilization Research; Lifelong Learning; *School Schedules; *Space Utilization; Track System (Education); *Year Round Schools

ABSTRACT

Year-round education (YRE) is much more than a space utilization program; it is a philosophy that considers the total learning environment. Lifestyles, work patterns, and communities are continuing to change, and YRE is designed to custom fit the individual needs of students and parents. The current opinion on YRE is split among those who support YRE, those who oppose it, and those who have not decided how they feel about YRE. The split of opinions leaves no one side in the majority. Four common organizational patterns are used by districts implementing a YRE system: (1) school-within-a-school, offering both 9-month and year-round options in the same building; (2) pair of geographically near schools, offering a choice within a neighborhood; (3) neighborhood cluster, offering one year-round schools out of three or four traditional schools; and (4) structure that can accommodate 9-month and year-round schooling within the same option. Eight factors summarize the philosophical rationale for YRE: continuous learning; employment realities, lifestyle diversities, curriculum facilities, improvement catalysts, community enhancements, people considerations, and personal choices. (KDP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
D.E. Glines
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE FOR YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

by Don Glines

ED 368 075

Year-round education (YRE) is based upon sound philosophical rationale -- upon a concept related to the quality of life. It goes beyond year-round school (YRS), which is only a mechanical scheduling system designed to house more students; YRS does not consider the total learning environment. Understanding educators are committed to YRE, for they realize its potential far exceeds the possibilities for either nine-month or year-round schooling.

YRE helps people individually, and society in general, by providing calendar, curriculum, and family options which more closely fit the changing lifestyles, work patterns, and community involvements for large segments of the population. Opportunity for continuous lifelong learning is becoming an essential characteristic as the world edges into the 21st Century. For the immediate, wherever possible, YRE should be offered as a choice. The current ideal is for a school or district to offer both the nine-month and year-round calendar plans as alternatives. If only one time form is possible, there are a number of reasons for considering continuous education.

Flexible, and especially optional, 12-month calendars can be tailored to fit the personal needs and preferences of each family unit by permitting vacation and other non-school activities to be scheduled throughout the year. Such a desirable goal is no longer theoretical, but practical, efficient, and effective, and even politically palatable, when properly understood and implemented. Continuous programs extend the learning opportunities available to all students by keeping school doors open more days of the year (usually 240, compared with 180), and by improving the learning choices in creative ways utilizing the summer climate months and multiple intersessions. They increase the resources available to society in three specific areas: human, physical, and fiscal.

The human aspect is enhanced by enrolling only 66-80 percent of the students in the school buildings at one time, thereby leaving a potential pool of 20-34 percent of the youth throughout the year for community services. Hospital candy stripers, grandchildren for senior citizens, migrant student tutors, and other such badly needed volunteer personnel are among the possible contributions, while alleviating site congestion. This notion is not new. William Wirt, Superintendent in Gary, Indiana, in the early 1930s wrote The Great American Lockout in which he protested the closing of schools in the summer. He backed his own convictions when Lloyd Trump, then a Gary principal, implemented a program where the school was open free to all for 50 weeks -- days, evenings, Sundays. The building closed for only two weeks in August -- and this was during the Depression.

The physical aspects of multiple track programs allow districts to consider fewer facilities. Precious land can be saved for more valuable ecological, park, and recreation use; the ongoing energy demands can be reduced; and the immediate drain on rapidly depleting raw materials can be relieved. Additional space can also be created for curriculum expansion. It does not make sense for community learning centers to stand empty for three months. Parents do not close hospitals (also helping institutions) for the same period. Correspondingly, the fiscal piece can be alleviated by avoiding unnecessary new construction; millions of dollars can be saved in growing communities. Long-term maintenance costs, and ongoing insurance and utilities fees can be reduced.

EA 025713

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In declining districts, older buildings may be closed sooner, preventing costly repairs and returning the structure and site to the community for new uses. Peak traffic reduction is a gift from YRE programs, but certainly is a consideration in the crowded-freeway communities. Single track calendars do not save space or money, but, coupled with intersessions, they can offer continuous twelve-month learning.

Support is growing for YRE. In most districts, there is a 30-40-30 division of opinion when the concept is first broached. A minimum of 30 percent of the families will volunteer for a year-round calendar, 40 will be uncertain, and 30 will be opposed. Seventy percent is normally the maximum number of volunteers during the first and second years, though a few have reached 90; the average usually falls between 45-55 percent. Of the 30 most always opposed, 10-15 percent will be highly emotional, almost violently, against the plan. Some of the middle 40 will join the opponents when they are uncertain about how the proposal will affect them. The resulting early discussions of YRE leave a minority opposed, a minority uncertain, and a minority in favor. These figures can lead to conflict and win/lose schisms between voluntary and mandatory YRE proponents, and those who oppose any YRE adoption. Such splits in communities are unnecessary and contrary to the productive energy of the district, but divisions often occur where people do not comprehend the philosophy and purposes of YRE.

When first considering a change in school calendars, many leaders are searching for a way to alleviate overcrowding in classrooms and special facilities. Space is not, and should not be the driving force in establishing YRE; it is one of the side benefits. It is true that if districts are short of space, a continuous plan should be considered as one of perhaps five options: pass more bond and tax revenues and erect more buildings; double shift and/or extend the school day; initiate a voluntary YRE program and recruit enough participants to reduce the crowding; mandate a year-round calendar to create 25-35 percent more space, and thus, solve the enrollment problem; and mandate year-round and also build, sometimes a necessity in areas of rapidly increasing populations.

In space-cramped communities, mandating year-round education is acceptable if it appears to be the best of the alternatives. Requiring YRE is no worse than mandating the present traditional nine-month calendar which is enforced in most districts. Comprehending this can lead to the 70 percent support, as the middle group will join the in-favor group to create an immediate solution to overcrowding. Unfortunately, the opponents of YRE are not willing to acknowledge the dictatorial aspects of the September-June calendar, and therefore continue to fight against the proposed year-round solution. The concept should not be the pawn in district space confrontations. Facilities use is not the prime justification for changing the calendar; the important reasons relate to programs, people, choice, learning, and a democratic lifestyle. Therefore, year-round education should be offered as an option to all who could benefit, even if a district has a status quo or declining enrollment. If communities understand YRE as a philosophy, then the 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 -- or even 80 or 90 percent -- of the people who volunteer should be allowed to implement a program.

Imagine only 30 percent volunteering for the first year; that should be considered beautiful. The other 70 can remain longer in the traditional calendar; that is also beautiful, for both plans help people, which is the purpose of education. If a flexible year-round calendar can assist a significant minority of the families, then the district has the moral responsibility to provide such a program. It is a simple option to implement. It can be accomplished without additional, or only minimal, expense, and does not need to cause great conflict -- certainly no more than having Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant faiths sharing the community.

Related to curriculum, YRE on a voluntary, and more so on a mandatory basis, frees space for often needed additional special facilities such as art, industrial technology, home economics, drama, music, physical education, and resource centers. Most elementary schools were constructed with limited square footage designed for such programs. YRE in a full, but not overcrowded building, allows for conversion to these needs at no additional construction expense. In secondary schools at maximum capacity, YRE allows for expansion of space for these curriculum fields.

It is easy to envision, then, that YRE must be internalized philosophically for all its potential advantages to be understood, and to overcome any perceived or real disadvantages. Accepted as part of an educational philosophy, YRE should be available to all persons in a district, pre-kindergarten through adult, who could benefit, whether the community is growing or declining. Only in extremely small, rural districts may the option of YRE not be feasible, but even there, a mandated year-round program might provide more for the families than a mandated nine-month calendar. Most population centers, even of significant size, either do not offer YRE, provide it only at the elementary, or in one section of the district, perhaps where it is overcrowded. They do not understand the philosophical intent of giving calendar and learning choices to all persons regardless of age level or the location of their home. YRE is an exciting option at all levels of learning. Fortunately, more educators are beginning to understand that it can and does work well in middle and high schools and colleges, as well as at the elementary and preschool ages.

When YRE is mandated throughout the district, the schools focus on calendar and curriculum changes, but even in overcrowded situations, every effort should be made to create the availability of a nine-month calendar for those special need situations: health, extended travel, employment, and extenuating family situations. An Appeals Board can be established to function as the approval mechanism. To arrange for a traditional summer vacation, those limited numbers of exempt students can be allowed to jump tracks (when group A goes on vacation several of the students may transfer to group B, then to group C, and finally to group D). Sometimes a portion of a building, or one entire school, can be maintained on a conventional calendar. A continuous nine-month special plan can be used for any calendar period (as July through March), not just September to June.

In implementing the year-round concept within the philosophically ideal voluntary conditions, a number of common organizational patterns have developed throughout the nation. They all work; one is not better than another. Four have emerged as the most popular and all are preferable to mandating, except in cases of extreme overcrowding. The first is the school-within-a-school plan. A number of sites offer both the nine-month and year-round options within the same building; some even refer to

the selection as the single vacation and multiple vacation plans, rather than YRE, for an advantage of the voluntary choice is the option of one longer vacation, or several shorter periods throughout the year. The second pattern is to pair geographically near schools, so that families have the choice of a neighborhood nine-month or year-round calendar. A third method is to create the "neighborhood cluster" where one of three or four buildings offers the option of a continuous learning design. A fourth effective approach is to develop a structure that can accommodate either a nine-month or continuous year option within the same calendar, such as is possible in the Concept 8, Flexible All-Year, and Personalized Plans.

Creative districts offer families true freedom of choice, wherever YRE has been understood as a philosophy, not just a method of housing students or saving money. Districts that have begun year-round calendars and then later dropped them are among those guilty of not comprehending continuous lifelong learning. They only see a mechanical way (YRS) to temporarily house an influx of students; they have not considered the 21st Century. Those energetic educators who have looked toward future learning delivery systems have been developing new varieties of calendar plans. No one scheduling arrangement has proven to be best -- only the most acceptable at this moment in time in a given location. YRE is still in the propeller stage in the majority of current efforts, but the jet and space ages of YRE have already been envisioned. The ideas are practical now when properly supported; needed for the future are "Voyager, Discovery, Endeavor, Columbia" style dreamers and doers.

For the present, over 20 different mechanical methods of rearranging the calendar toward continuous learning concepts exist: Staggered 45-15; Block 45-15; Flexible 45-15; Staggered, Block, Flexible 60-20; Staggered, Block, Flexible 90-30; Staggered or Block 30-10; 25-5; Concept 6; Modified Concept 6; Concept 8; Concept 16; Multiple Access; Quarter Plan; Quinmester; 60-15; Orchard Plan; Extended School Year; Modified Summer Term: Flexible All-Year; Personalized Continuous Year, and many special community variations. They all work; they can all "fail."

Interwoven with these plans are the intersessions, the year-round equivalent of summer school, but with a totally different perspective. They are considered a continuous part of the learning process, not isolated summer courses. The majority of students return for two or three enrollments (in a 45-15, they may take one or two of the three-week vacations, but they attend the other two or three intersession terms). Traditional, remedial, and enrichment opportunities are offered; more exciting are the creative, innovative curriculum options. Many are off-campus, community-centered alternatives, such as drama at the local theater, or psychology at the mental health ward of the hospital, or tent living and environmental studies in the mountains, or oceanography at the sea coast, or pesticide studies on a farm. Parks and recreation activities, most sports, learning vacations (a study of the cavalry-Indian conflicts in Montana), year-round Bible schools, and community agency functions are available during the intersession periods, too.

YRE has been criticized by those who administer very traditional group-paced education organizations. They cite that in some smaller elementary schools teachers have been forced to accept two grade levels to balance the class enrollments. At the secondary, in small departmentalized programs, administrators have found it difficult to schedule singletons; teachers have insisted

on rigid, but educationally indefensible prerequisites. This, again, is a matter of philosophy (YRE) versus mechanics (YRS) -- of individuals who do not accept the rationale for continuous learning options for people, and alternative teaching styles. Ironically, part of the solution to these perceived dilemmas is to implement better educational practices. Those who volunteer for YRE will understand and want to create exciting programs. The advantages of non-graded, team taught, classrooms have been known for years, yet conventionally trained teachers have refused to examine the data. Seventh graders range from grade 3 to grade 13 on standardized achievement tests. Most grade levels have a plus or minus four-year span. Staff cannot argue for a seventh or fifth grade class when there truly are no such students. Even chronologically there is a gap of 12-15 months -- and, further, not all students mature or progress on the same timetable. Physiologically, there is a six year span for the seventh graders -- some are pre-puberty "5th;" others are young adults.

Good YRE programs purposely move toward non-graded learning modes. They also move toward individualization, especially at the secondary level, long proven to be more effective and feasible, at least in modified forms, if the methods are properly understood. Such an approach reduces the singleton/doubleton class dilemma. Students in a French class in most situations are spread from first through fifth year work, so they should just enroll in French, not French I or III. Some eighth grade English students write at fifth grade achievement standards and some at the 11th. Their instruction must be individualized; a common theme can keep a group working together as a class in English, not "eighth grade" English. Individualizing, non-grading, and teaming -- each excellent instructional, philosophical, and mechanical approaches to learning -- can be used to resolve the imagined dilemmas of combination and specialized classes. Similar changes can overcome other concerns, when there is a true commitment to lifelong learning. Such proposals are not wild, radical, impossible, or infeasible financially. They can be implemented by caring educators. They are not experimental ideas; they are recipes proven over many years, as related through educational history.

Though most districts are committing to YRE to solve space and finance problems, growing numbers are now offering it because of its non-space benefits. Even if facilities and funding are a major concern, educators are learning to help convince the communities toward a calendar change by highlighting the people and societal advantages for the majority of residents. Once accustomed to a multiple vacation plan, most families prefer to remain on it, if given a choice. Eight reasons summarize the Philosophical Rationale for Year-Round Education:

(1) Continuous Learning: The concept that schools, like hospitals, are helping institutions and should never close, is gaining acceptance. Students should be able to learn in any of the 12 months; they should not, according to advocates, find a "closed" sign on the door in July. With creative use of intersessions, and rotating groups of students, there are always teachers available to help youth learn. Where facilities are too crowded to offer many intersession classes (vacation programs) on-campus, exciting use is made of many off-campus sites: parks, beaches, theaters, churches, art and music centers, mountains, swimming pools, zoos, business and industry laboratories, and portables.

(2) Employment Realities: Construction workers, moving van drivers, farmers, baseball players, summer tourist operators, park rangers, those low on union seniority lists, and certain business employees, among others, cannot take summer vacations. Districts are learning that these parents appreciate non-summer periods to create time with their children. The high percentage of such families in some communities is surprising. Further, teachers can increase their earnings through extended contracts, intersession employment, and substituting. Most outdoor workers in Minnesota need their vacation in January or February, not in July or August.

(3) Lifestyle Diversities: States such as California have wonderful weather in September, October, April, May. Those who can afford to travel usually prefer the desert in the spring, autumn leaves in the fall, skiing in the winter. Districts are offering families three or four short vacations, rather than one long period. The calendar change has been called the "four-vacation plan" in several communities, rather than YRE. In many regions, combining employment and lifestyle preferences creates a strong majority who do not want schools closed June, July, and August. Swimming is still available during the summer break and with indoor pools, in the winter too. Few families can take three consecutive months away from work; homelessness occurs in all 12 months.

(4) Curriculum Facilities: Some districts that are full, but not overcrowded, are using YRE to create "elbow room." A school built for 900 can be reduced in on-site enrollment to 675 by a four-track calendar, thus freeing eight rooms to use for drama, art, computers, library, shops, ad hoc needs, or other special enhancements. A junior high of 1,600 can be reduced to 1,200, lessening the crowds in the halls, library, lockers, gyms, special facilities, and cafeteria. Overcrowded schools can ease the crush on shops, rooms, labs, and outdoor space by reducing the numbers on campus each track.

(5) Improvement Catalysts: Schools are also using YRE as a catalyst for restructuring. When adopting a continuous calendar, staff can consider Organization changes -- non-grading; Curriculum -- individualization; Facilities -- remodeling for elementary science; and Philosophy -- more attention to the affective domain. Everything should be examined when considering a new calendar. Districts are finding that when properly implemented, year-round can and should improve the school. It opens the opportunity for change and innovation -- and the transition toward 21st Century learning systems.

(6) Community Enhancements: YRE has been enhancing communities through the adoption of 12-month swimming lessons, park and recreation programs, and year-round Bible schools; reduced highway congestion; less summer pressure on the police force; ongoing volunteers for health and social agencies; and continuous help for limited-English-speaking and special education youth. Preliminary evaluation has indicated that there is great potential for reducing the dropout rate and for increasing student skill and knowledge levels. Even gangs can be partially separated. Gifted students can pursue additional learning in specific areas of interest, while parents can be involved with learning year-round.

(7) People Considerations: The affluent can be concerned with skiing, vacations to Alaska, and private camp experiences. But one of seven anglo, four of nine black, and three of eight hispanic youth live in poverty. Forty million Americans are desperate,

and many homeless and extremely transient; 39 percent are young people. YRE offers a "continuous home/role model" for part of the day every month, with breakfast, lunch, and snacks for a significant number of children in poverty. Those students who also attend intersessions receive services while on vacation, including efforts to address health and emotional as well as educational needs. Low-income families usually cannot take long trips, but with the variety of off-track periods, children can share at home whenever the parent can arrange a few days away from work or when unemployed. For those youth in "minimal home conditions," some relief may be possible daily by participating in year-round education. For others, hunting and fishing are options "in-season".

(8) Personal Choices: Ideally year-round should be a win-win decision. Wherever possible, both YR and nine month learning should be offered as options. It should not be mandated unless essential, but is should not be denied those who benefit. If 49 percent want YRE, that is beautiful: if 51 percent can be helped by September through June, that is beautiful, too. It should not be win-lose. The 30-40-30 split that usually occurs when first proposed can be turned into a positive by caring educators. If YRE is implemented humanely, with considerations for all, it will be sanctioned by the majority. If a YR calendar must be mandated, try to provide nine month options for those special individual family needs.

Year-round is not new. It was offered in Bluffton, IN, in 1904; Amarillo, TX, 1910; Newark, NJ, 1912; Minot, ND,1917; Omaha, NE. 1924; Nashville, TN. 1925; Aliquippa, PA, 1928, as examples. The "modern" era began in Hayward, CA, 1968; Mankato, MN, 1969; St. Charles, MO, 1969; Valley View, IL, 1970; Chula Vista and La Mesa, CA, 1971. The National Association for Year-Round Education has been in existence for a quarter of a century.

If YRE can be understood as a philosophy, as a means for assisting the improvement of the quality of life for individual persons and for society as a whole, the concept will continue to grow as a viable alternative which can enhance the potential of learning and living in communities. For now, YRE, accepted in a win/win spirit, can personalize learning opportunities for all who choose to participate in the continuous programs which the concept can provide during the closing years of the 20th Century.

Don Glines is Director of Educational Futures Projects and a Consultant for the California Department of Education, both of Sacramento. He may be reached at P.O. Box 2977, Sacramento, 95812.